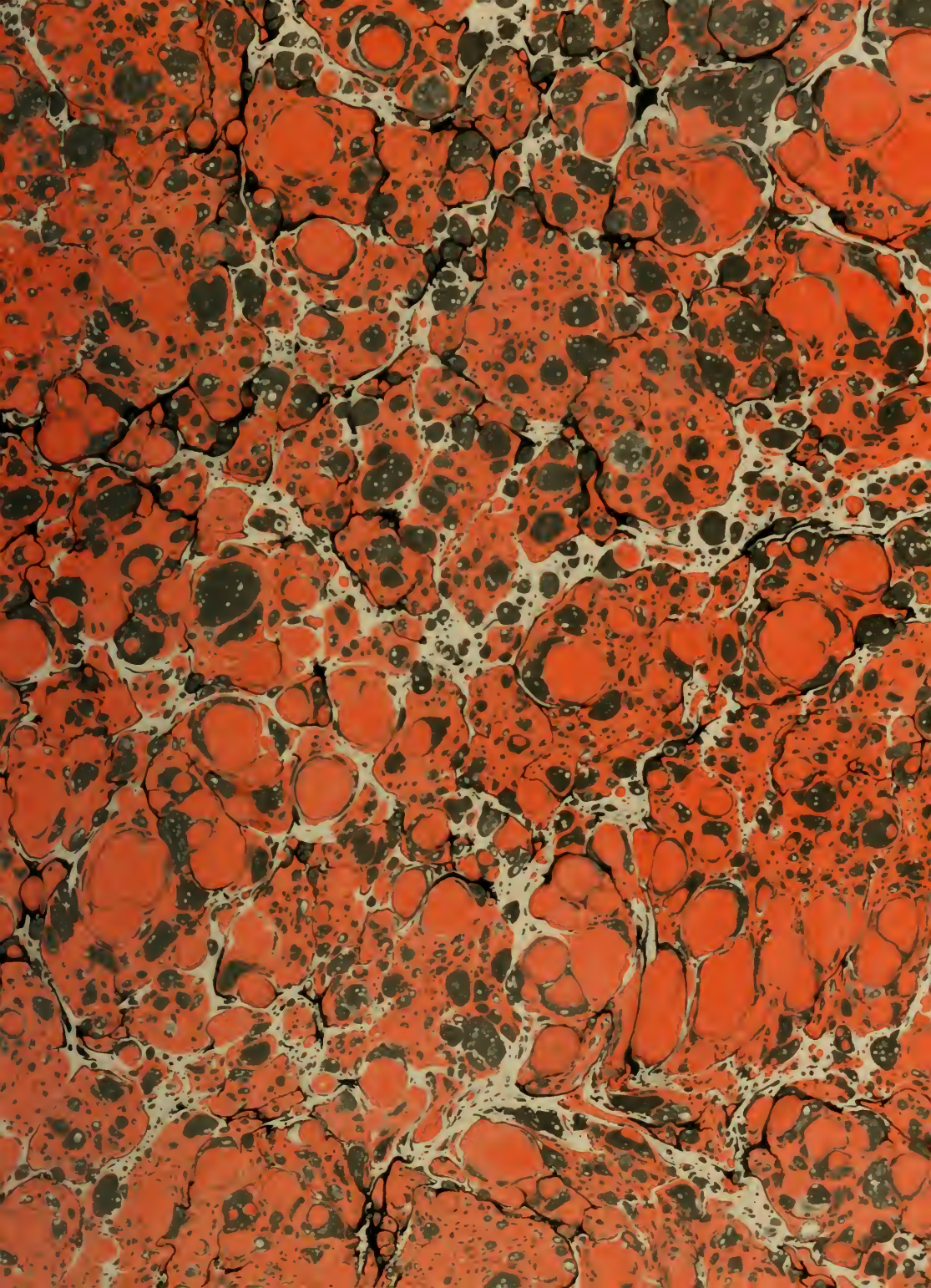

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Dr. DRUMMOND's

SERMON

Before the HONOURABLE

Houſe of Commons,

January 30, 1747-8.

Lunæ 1° *Die Februarii*, 1747-8.

Ordered,

THAT the Thanks of this Houſe be given to the Honourable and Reverend Dr. *Drummond*, for the Sermon by him Preached before this Houſe upon *Saturday* laſt at St. *Margaret*'s *Weſtminſter*; and that he be deſired to Print the ſame; and that Mr. *Sollicitor General*, Mr. *Chancellor* of the *Exchequer*, and Mr. *Hoblyn* do acquaint him therewith.

N. HARDINGE,
Cl. Dom. Com.

A

SERMON

Preached before the HONOURABLE

Houſe of COMMONS,

AT

St. *Margaret's Weſtminſter*,

On *Saturday*, January 30, 1747-8.

BEING THE

Day appointed to be obſerved as the Day of the *Martyrdom* of King *Charles* I.

By the Honourable and Reverend

ROBERT DRUMMOND, D.D.

Prebendary of *Weſtminſter*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

LONDON:

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MDCCXLVIII.

ACM. 1498.D78

ISAIAH xix, 2, 3, 4.

I will ſet the Egyptians *againſt the* Egyptians: *and they ſhall fight every one againſt his brother, and every one againſt his neighbour; city againſt city, and kingdom againſt kingdom.*

And the ſpirit of Egypt *ſhall fail in the midſt thereof, and I will deſtroy the counſel thereof: and they ſhall ſeek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar ſpirits, and to the wizards.*

And the Egyptians *will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king ſhall rule over them, ſaith the Lord, the Lord of Hoſts.*

WE know little more of the hiſtory of *Egypt*, at this period of time, than what is here denounced by the Prophet. The Lord *gave* the *Egyptians up unto their own hearts luſts, and let them follow their own imaginations:* theſe, by a natural courſe of events, produced Civil Diſſentions, Weakneſs in the State, and Extravagancy in Religion; the end of which things was Tyranny. —A ſeries of calamities, delineated with a remarkable reſemblance Pſ. lxxxi. 13

to the hiſtory of thoſe times, which we are called upon by Public Authority to remember on this day.

Here we have the word of the Prophet to mark out the immediate hand of God; but what he, in this caſe, declares to be *the determinate counſel of* . xix. 17. *the Lord of Hoſts* againſt the land of *Egypt*, is ſufficiently declared by the very conſtitution of things, to be the juſt courſe of his Providence over all nations. We cannot reach the depths of Providence; but we may contemplate thoſe eternal laws of truth and righteouſneſs, which equally and conſtantly direct the ordinary courſe of that Providence. We may found our notions upon great and known principles; upon the nature of God and of man; upon fact and obſervation; upon the conſtitution and courſe of things; upon the frame of human minds and the hiſtory of nations. Theſe conſiderations, in general, ought to be the ſubject of our frequent reflection; but they come more home to ourſelves, when we reflect upon the hiſtory of our own country: particularly, when we reflect upon times of general diſtreſs; and take a review of great events, in which our own age is not entirely unconcerned.

This Faſt therefore was wiſely inſtituted; and will continue to be worthy our obſervance, as long as experience continues to be an inſtructor and guide through every part of life. This intereſting period

period of our hiſtory affords ample ſcope for our moſt ſerious attention: it points out to us the rocks and ſhelves, upon which the daring ſpirits of that age ſhipwrecked this nation.—Surely, theſe reflections ought to have their full weight with us, who have lately been ſo near to confuſion, and ſo providentially delivered from it.

If we would reap thoſe benefits, which experience and reflection offer to us, in a proper obſervance of this day; we ſhould carefully avoid all bitterneſs of expreſſion againſt any particular ſets of men. This ſolemnity is not appointed to exaſperate us againſt perſons; but to guard us againſt dangerous principles: againſt thoſe licentious principles and practices, which, in the fatal ſcene of this day, compleated the ruin of our Conſtitution in Church and State. With this temper of mind, we may all find ſomething worthy our attention, in reviewing an age, diſtinguiſhed by ſo many extraordinary men, and ſo many ſignal actions; we may all lay up ſome uſeful obſervations, ſome profitable inſtruction for our own conduct, that may make us better Chriſtians, and conſequently better ſubjects. The growing evils of this age, perhaps, may not be the ſame, as they were then: but though diſſentions take their riſe from different cauſes; yet there is ſuch a general analogy between them, and they are ſo aſſimilated in their progreſs by the paſſions of men; that,

that, in the iſſue of things, they uſually agree in producing the ſame effects. From conſidering then the confuſions of thoſe times, we ſhould be admoniſhed to make the Conſtitution of our Country the rule of our civil conduct: and from an impartial enquiry into the Powers of that Conſtitution, learn to reverence their authority; and to ſecure the reſpective rights of Prince and People from every attack, that may tend to exalt the one upon the ruins of the other. We need not exaggerate the faults of our anceſtors on either ſide; we may be tender and compaſſionate in opening the wounds, which it is uſeful and neceſſary to probe; we may grow wiſer by their errors, and happier by their miſeries: thereby juſtifying the wiſdom of Authority, which has directed us to turn our thoughts to the great calamities of thoſe times, that
Pſ. xxxix. 1. we may *take heed to* our own *ways*. The great calamities of thoſe times were the ſame, as the calamities, which the Prophet here emphatically
Iſa. xix. 1. ſtiles *the burden of Egypt:* Civil Diſſentions, Weakneſs in the State, and Extravagancy in Religion: and, what was the end of theſe things? Tyranny. Let us endeavour then to trace the courſe of theſe evils, as marked out by the nature of things, and fatally illuſtrated by our own hiſtory.

The origin of national evils is generally found to be national depravity: which is no other than the depravity of the different members, ſpreading

ſo

ſo wide, as to corrupt the maſs of the nation. Hence are bred private *envying and ſtrife*; from whence cometh publick *confuſion and every evil work:* for perſonal views too often mix with national conſiderations; and, when they do, uſually govern them. Human policy therefore ſhould endeavour to improve the morals of men: but if every thing is allowed that tends to the corruption of morals, to reſtrain the effects of that corruption is impoſſible. Diſſentions, in their progreſs, propagate the vitious principles, from which they roſe: It is a conſtant and a judicious policy of thoſe, who promote diſſentions, to confound the true notions of perſons and things; and, as far as in them lies, to teach mankind to *call evil good and good evil.* Hence the ſacred boundaries of right and wrong are removed; the plain ſentiments of virtue and honour are depraved; the neceſſary reſtraints of religion are thrown off or perverted; and the pure ſenſe of ſhame and praiſe, which was given us to be the ſafeguard of virtue, and the natural incitement to great and good actions, is effaced, or proſtituted to ſerve the low turns of avarice and ambition. Virtuous union and friendſhip are baniſhed; diſtruſt and jealouſy are artfully ſown and induſtriouſly improved; facts are aggravated and miſrepreſented, reports and ſurmiſes eagerly ſpread and exaggerated; freſh provocations are daily given, freſh pretences for diviſion are daily taken: moſt men are drawn to one ſide or to the other, by ob-

Jam. iii. 16.

Iſa. v. 20.

ligation, by reſentment, by hopes, or by fears; perhaps obſtinacy, or falſe ſhame, or revenge confirms them in purſuits, which ſudden heat or raſhneſs began. The licentious are encouraged, the unwary are enſnared, and the ambitious inflamed. Publick faith is made ſubſervient to the views of faction; publick virtue is either derided or oppreſſed: the generous love of our country is ſeduced into the cauſe of rebellion, and the ſober ſpirit of liberty is changed into the extravagant ſpirit of uncontroulable licentiouſneſs. Such are the moral evils, which flow from diſſentions: to deſcribe the natural evils, would be to enumerate all the various degrees and ſorts of injuſtice, violence, rapine, and bloodſhed, which are the conſtant attendants of civil war.

The Great Rebellion is a notorious inſtance of the riſe, the progreſs, and power of diſſentions, which, through various acts of ſucceſsful iniquity, brought on the enormous treaſon of this day.

The circulation of property and the advancement of trade, in the century before theſe unhappy times, had changed the ballance of power, and increaſed the wealth and grandeur of the nation. This change was not duly attended to: and, in the preceding reign, peace and luxury, under a weak government, had propagated illegal maxims of policy, and nouriſhed a corruption in principles and

and manners, which ſhewed itſelf in different ſhapes, and at length deſtroyed the Religion, Laws, and Liberties of theſe kingdoms. The wrong meaſures of the court, ignorantly or wickedly adviſed, fixed in the minds of men, already prepared by jealouſy and ſuſpicion, ſuch ſtrong prejudices and ſuch an evil temper, as the induſtry of faction would never allow to ſubſide. The real friends of the King and of the People being equally blinded by their own zeal, brought on the ruin of both. Ambitious and ill-deſigning men lay hid behind the works, which the well-meaning part of the Parliament had raiſed againſt the Prerogative; 'till they got ſtrength of their own to compleat the ruin of the Conſtitution: which neither the conceſſions of the King, nor the power of his firſt oppoſers were able to ſave. The Eſtabliſhed Church ſtanding in the breach to ſupport the Conſtitution, fell firſt: Religion gave way to enthuſiaſm and hypocriſy, Law to violence: the King at laſt fell a ſacrifice to faction; and with him fell the Liberty of this Country.——If we conſider this unfortunate Prince, with all his faults about him, throughout the courſe of a various life; many of thoſe faults muſt be attributed to education, and more to evil adviſers: If we conſider his virtues, for many and great virtues he had, we muſt allow them to have been worthy of better times and better counſels. Iſa. liii. 12. But in his laſt moments, when *he poured out his ſoul unto death*, who could ſee him without horror

and admiration? all impartial men muſt agree, that, in this melancholy ſcene, he ſhewed a behaviour, which crowned the better part of his character, and taught his very enemies to forget the faults, they themſelves had before imputed to him.—Many of them found that *all the* old *foundations* of the Conſtitution were then *out of courſe*; but this they found too late: It was no longer in their power to curb the tyranny of the faction, which, at that time, had gained the aſcendant. Here ended all appearance of order: variety of abuſes and encroachments roſe up, as different powers, exerted on different opportunities, gave them birth: and the people felt at once the iron yoke of tyranny, with all the miſeries of anarchy and confuſion.

Pſ. lxxxii. 5.

In this mixed ſcene of tumult and oppreſſion, what could follow, but Weakneſs in the State? the real ſtrength of the nation was broken; *the whole head was ſick, and the whole heart faint.* The ſtrength and credit of a people can ſpring from union only: for diſſentions, in their natural effects, breed rancour and animoſities, which deſtroy the inward tranquillity, and conſequently exhauſt the vigour of a nation, looſen the bands of ſociety, and expoſe it both to domeſtic and foreign enemies. It was a happy circumſtance for this kingdom, that, while the beſt blood of it was ſpilling in theſe Civil Wars, no foreign enemy had leiſure to take advan-

Iſa. i. 5.

advantage of our diſtreſs: yet how did *fearfulneſs and trembling come* upon all conſiderate minds! how did *an horrible dread overwhelm* them! *mens hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after thoſe things which were coming on the earth!* The ſeveral powers of the Conſtitution were now ſhaken, and their different rights and privileges confounded and ſubverted: *the people were oppreſſed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child behaved himſelf proudly againſt the ancient, and the baſe againſt the honourable: every man did that which was right in his own eyes:* and the neceſſary conſequences of theſe things were ravage, deſolation, and all the fatal extremities, that could be dreaded from the furiouſneſs of a lawleſs multitude. *The ſpirit of a kingdom* thus *divided againſt itſelf, and waſted with miſery, will* inevitably *fail in the midſt thereof, and the counſel thereof will be deſtroyed.* Many great characters indeed did in thoſe times, many did lately, in our own times, appear to ſave this nation: and, I truſt, there never will be wanting thoſe, who would rather fall a ſacrifice for the Liberties of their Country, than ſurvive them. They may fall a glorious ſacrifice: but their Country muſt fall with them, except we continue to cultivate that ſenſe of *righteouſneſs*, which we ſeemed to have felt for a time, *when the judgments of God were in the earth*; and improve thoſe

Pſalm lv. 5.

Luke xxi. 26.

Iſa. iii. 5.

Judg. xvii. 6.

Iſa. xix. 3. Matth. xii. 25. Pſ. cxxxvii. 8.

Iſa. xxvi. 9.

thoſe virtuous principles, which only can give us a juſt value for our Religion and Liberties, and inſpire us with union, ſtrength, and courage to defend them.

When this diſorderly ſtate of things, in the Great Rebellion, had thus rooted out the ſober principles of virtue, and weakened the bands of government; Extravagancy in Religion ſoon prevailed amidſt the civil confuſions. The decent ſervice and rational doctrines of the Church of *England* being baniſhed: in their ſtead, ſprang up an endleſs variety of enthuſiaſtick opinions and modes of worſhip; deſtructive of all true piety and virtue, unworthy the underſtanding of man, and injurious to the honour of God.

Schemes of religion always have been, and always will be moulded together with ſyſtems of government; and artful leaders will often cover their deſigns, whatever they be, under this colour. It concerns therefore the wiſdom and honeſty of a Legiſlature, to preſerve a Church eſtabliſhed upon the principles of purity and freedom: For, when once men are allowed to give a looſe to the extravagancy of their own fancies, no human laws can curb the inſolence, or prevent the diſorders, that may happen from that variety of error, into which the mind of man is apt to wander. This was ſeverely

verely felt in thoſe outrages, which enthuſiaſm, led by hypocriſy, occaſioned in theſe Civil Wars. —Enthuſiaſm is a blind zeal, fit to be led, but incapable of leading: enthuſiaſm is properly a weakneſs of the mind, founded upon falſe and ſervile notions of the Deity; but yet attended with a fervour, that is ready to execute the moſt violent enterpriſes. This is a proper tool in the hands of diſcontented men, whoſe extenſive ſchemes can only be formed and principally conducted by cool counſels, ſtrong reaſon, and prudent foreſight: theſe are not the product of enthuſiaſtick imaginations. The hypocrite is indeed equal to ſuch a taſk, for he puts on whatever maſk is ſuitable to his deſign, while the neceſſary qualities lie concealed within: and under the umbrage of religion, he puſhes on the wild enthuſiaſt to the moſt unjuſtifiable exceſſes; to rebellion, murder, and aſſaſſination. —This was the caſe in thoſe times, which we are at preſent reviewing. Religious diſputes had been carried to a height, which true religion could never authoriſe, and true policy ſhould never allow: Theſe diſputes were nouriſhed by the reſtleſs humours and vain conceits of the many, 'till they produced that extravagant ſpirit of enthuſiaſm: which mingling itſelf with the ſpirit of ſedition, added fuel to the heads and hearts of men, already too much heated with ambition, reſentment, and faction. Injuſtice, and rage, and cruelty were the offspring

offspring of this headstrong spirit: the vilest actions were justified under the injured name of religion, perjury and perfidy were sanctified, and conscience was pleaded as an authority to break through the most sacred obligations of morality.

These enormities cast such a reproach upon the Protestant name; that many, drawing unjust inferences, to the prejudice of a religion, which they saw perverted to the worst designs, with an undistinguishing zeal, embraced the errors of Popery: whilst others, of a more licentious turn of mind, to avoid the imputation of hypocrisy, abstained even from all appearance of religion; and fell from the extravagancy of enthusiasm into a contempt of all that is serious and sacred. Thus did this unchristian spirit not only bring infamy and misery on that age, but intailed also irreparable mischiefs on ages to come.

The end of these things was, what might be expected, Tyranny; the tyranny of a fellow-subject. This is a natural step from sedition and irreligion: for, when men have lost sight of the boundaries of good government, and thrown off the necessary restraints of religion, they wander in a maze, 'till they easily fall a prey to a tyrant, who has abilities to deceive, lead, and curb them. This is a common result of the successful sedition of the many, who cannot be so uniform in their designs, or consistent

conſiſtent in their views, as to manage and maintain the power they get; but they run upon the very rock, they mean to avoid. Thus, in theſe Civil Wars, the people grew uneaſy at thoſe limitations, which only can make ſociety a bleſſing, and government practicable: but did not their *own wickedneſs correct* them and their *back-ſlidings reprove* them? They rejected the polity of the Eſtabliſhed Church; and ſoon brought themſelves into bondage, under an implacable ſpirit of intolerance and perſecution: they murdered their lawful Sovereign, that they might be free; and they found themſelves in the very depths of ſlavery: ſubjected to as abſolute a power, as ever any nation groaned under. They would not give their Protector the name of king, but he took the power of a tyrant: nor, in the ſtate in which the nation then was, could he do leſs: for law was abrogated, religion was governed by fancy, and the ſword became the only meaſure of right and wrong. Yet ſo uncertain is the ſecurity of unlawful power, that notwithſtanding the great abilities and courage of the Uſurper, he lived at laſt under the continual dread of being maſſacred by his own faction. Jer. ii 19.

After his death, ſuch a variety of different tyrannies oppreſſed theſe kingdoms, that the People could find no way ſo well out of this confuſion, as by returning back to that Regal Authority, which they had before deſtroyed: and they re-

turned back with ſo much eagerneſs and impatience, that they were running headlong into the arms of Arbitrary Power; had not the torrent been ſtopped by the integrity of two able Miniſters, who preſerved the Religion, Laws, and Liberties of their Country.

1 Cor. x. 6. Luke xix. 42. *Now theſe things were our examples:* and may they teach us, *in this* our *day, the things which belong unto* our *peace*, before *they are hid from* our *eyes!* They will teach us to look back upon the ſtorms, which our anceſtors raiſed and ſuffered, as well as upon thoſe, which we have eſcaped: they will teach us (if we are content to learn wiſdom from their errors and their miſeries) to reverence the Laws, as the beſt preſervatives of our Liberties; to hold faſt a pure reformed Religion which is ſo intimately connected with them; and by grateful obedience to ſecond HIS care, who is the Guardian and Diſpenſer of theſe bleſſings to us: they will teach us to make our happy Conſtitution in Church and State, the ſubject of our frequent and ſerious reflection, the object of our conſtant attention, and our warmeſt zeal. How elſe can we ſtrengthen the old foundations, or ſecure the boundaries of the reſpective powers? how elſe can we guard againſt the cool deſigns, or the impetuous attempts of thoſe, who grow impatient of the neceſſary reſtraints, which alone make Civil and Religious Liberty either valuable or laſting?—It is the unavoidable

dable lot of all human conſtitutions, that every practicable ſyſtem is far below the ſtandard of perfection, both in the inſtitution and adminiſtration of it: but a Conſtitution in Church and State, founded on rational and free principles, and tempered ſo as to check the irregularities of human paſſions, working in the different branches of power, ſeems in theory to be formed to convey the greateſt ſhare of happineſs to mankind; appears in practice to be the beſt adapted to the temper of this nation; and, however plauſible other ideas may be, is perhaps the beſt form of government, that the mind of man can frame, and the weakneſs of man will bear. Our anceſtors have tranſmitted down to us a noble ſyſtem of Policy, in equal oppoſition to popular licence and arbitrary will; and connected with it a form of pure Religion, equally diſtant from wild enthuſiaſm and implicit faith. Theſe mutually ſupport and ſtrengthen each other: the fruit of this union is Liberty, liberty both of mind and body: but yet it is liberty conſiſtent with decency, order, diſcipline, and good government; for the moſt perfect liberty that man can enjoy, muſt have its proper bounds, to fence and ſecure itſelf. The abuſes both of power and liberty, and the fatal effects to religion and government, which flowed from theſe abuſes in the Great Rebellion, are a ſufficient admonition to thoſe who are appointed to govern, as well as to thoſe whoſe duty it is to obey, not to overſtrain

either. They are a conſtant leſſon to us, that *li-*
1 Pet. ii. 16. *berty ſhould not be uſed for a cloke of maliciouſneſs*, nor power be exerted without moderation: that all indulgence ſhould be ſhown to tender conſciences; but that Toleration ſhould not be made a ſcreen to licentiouſneſs and prophaneneſs: that *conſciences ſhould be won by truth, time, inſtruction, and per-*
Walſingham's letter. Cabala.p.406. *ſuaſion, not forced by authority; but that cauſes of conſcience loſe their nature, when they exceed their bounds and grow matter of faction.* Above all things, the true Conſtitutional Powers of our Country ſhould be always kept in our view: and if they are, what they ought to be, the conſtant guide of our conduct, they will be a perpetual ſource of union, ſtrength, and happineſs, and naturally promote the joint ſecurity, proſperity, and glory of Prince and People.

If we look into the riſe and progreſs of our Conſtitution, we ſhall find it was modelled by the wiſdom, has been ſupported by the virtue of our anceſtors, and can only be deſtroy'd by our own vice and folly. That Virtue is the ſtrongeſt ſupport of government, and the countenancing of virtue the ſoundeſt policy; is a truth obvious to vulgar Obſervation: a truth, ſo fix'd in the nature of things by the juſtice of God, that it will make its force felt by every ſociety, and every individual. And yet there is hardly one man, who ſeriouſly lays it to heart, how far he contributes to the publick diſ-

order;

order; when moſt undoubtedly publick diſorder ariſes out of the infirmities, follies and vices of individuals. How then can generous or noble deſigns, for the good of our Country, be expected from men of vitious and ſelfiſh courſes in private life? To check theſe, is not ſo much in the power of the Legiſlature, as in the breaſt of every individual: every man may, and ought to *keep his own heart with all diligence*; thus he will contribute his ſhare to promote national virtue, honour, and happineſs. It is more particularly the duty as well as the intereſt of thoſe, whoſe ſituation intruſts them with the power of countenancing virtuous conduct, and makes their influence even more extenſive by the example they ſet, than by the actual virtues they poſſeſs.——The diſtractions of thoſe times, which are the ſubject of our preſent attention, furniſh us with a flagrant inſtance, that the ſevereſt ſanctions of law are inſufficient to bind the general obſervance of it upon the fears of men, when better principles have loſt their effect upon their conſcience.

Prov. iv. 23.

Let us therefore *give all diligence* to cultivate *Virtue*, as the ſureſt preſervative of national order and ſtrength: but let us alſo *add to our virtue knowledge*. By the examples of thoſe times, we ſee how dangerous the heats even of honeſt men are, to themſelves as well as others, when they are not regulated by prudence, and checked by foreſight:

2 Pet. i. 5.

ſight: for the beſt of men, when once over-heated, are, by their warmth, more eaſily betrayed into meaſures, which lay a foundation for the cool and diſſembled purſuits of the worſt: and, when once the ancient landmarks are removed, it is ſeldom in the power of the honeſt part of the nation to bring government and religion back within their due bounds.——When once we have left the plain ways of virtue and honeſty, we are ſoon loſt in the crooked paths of deceit, which are endleſs: no one knows where he may be led, when he gives up his own principles to the humour, or paſſions, or artifice of another. We may eaſily call to mind the unexpected lengths, to which many wiſe and good men were carried in theſe Civil Wars: they meant honeſtly, to bring the Prerogative within its proper limits: but they found themſelves ſoon reduced to the cruel neceſſity, either of going on to ruin the Conſtitution, or elſe of ſuffering by that violent ſpirit, which they themſelves had raiſed, but could not govern. We may bring this caſe home to our own times, and conſider the danger of not adhering conſtantly to the great principles of religion and government; which will always make us act a very weak, or a very diſhoneſt part. Nothing, but ſteadineſs in principle, and a juſt diſcernment of the conſequences of meaſures, can produce uniformity in conduct. The conduct of Papiſts, upon their principles, is uniform and ſincere, however ſilent

lent it may be, in endeavouring to ſubvert our Civil and Religious Liberties. But what ſhall we ſay for thoſe, who, whilſt they call themſelves Proteſtants, whilſt they ſeem to conſider the Proteſtant Religion as, what it really is, founded upon maxims of purity and freedom, whilſt they talk of the excellence and valuableneſs of the Conſtitution; yet, notwithſtanding all this, by their behaviour help, at leaſt to undermine, if not to ſubvert all the true ſupports of the Religion and Liberties of their Country; contrary to their oaths, contrary to their duty, their intereſt, and perhaps their real ſentiments, when they are not inflamed? Can this inconſiſtency be reſolved into any thing, but either a want of penetration to diſcern the conſequences of other mens principles, or a defect of courage to maintain their own; which gives them up a prey to that party-rage, or, as ſome affect to call it, party-honour; (for honour is too often proſtituted to the moſt diſhonourable purpoſes) that party-rage and party-honour; which, having once gained a full aſcendant, lead even reaſonable and otherwiſe honeſt men into the moſt abſurd and unjuſtifiable conduct, and carry them blindly on to forge the chains for their own necks? This was fatally verified in theſe Civil Wars, when many good men ſunk under the tyranny of a faction, nouriſhed and ſtrengthened by themſelves: and this will always happen to well-meaning men, if their meaſures are not prudently conducted, as well as honeſtly intentioned.

This

This is a ſtrong reaſon why we ſhould keep a watchful eye upon our own conduct, as well as the conduct of others, in *the beginning of ſtrife:* we are likewiſe taught by experience, how difficult it is for government and religion to return back into their proper channel, when they have been once diverted from it. Enthuſiaſm and hypocriſy in the age, which we have been reviewing, produced libertiniſm and irreligion in the next; and licentiouſneſs in government had near entailed arbitrary power upon us. The generality of men are always more prone to run from one extreme to another, than to correct abuſes: frenzy is ſucceeded by the oppoſite frenzy; violence is made a pretence to provoke violence; perſecution begets perſecution; and the ſtiller voice of reaſon, juſtice, and truth is not heard in the midſt of factious rage and confuſion. We muſt conſider alſo that nations at different times are differently circumſtanced, according to their different temper and genius, their religion and manners, their civil conſtitution and connexions with other ſtates: particular conjunctures formed from theſe and other accidental events, have great effects on government, and eſpecially in the changes of it. It is therefore of the greateſt importance to diſcover the peculiar ſtate of a nation ariſing from theſe cauſes: and by comparing this peculiar ſtate of the nation with the principles upon

Prov. xvii. 14.

upon which men act, the means they employ, and the ends they purſue, we may judge of the equity as well as the probable iſſue of meaſures. Theſe reflections ſhould warn us, not to be too haſty in *meddling with them that are given to change:* they ſhould warn us more particularly, to trace out the different branches of a Conſtitution, which is ſo juſtly and happily tempered in itſelf, that each may produce good, and be reſtrained from producing evil: and to conſider the ſteps, which tend to preſerve or overturn ſuch a Conſtitution. Theſe are things, in which it moſt nearly concerns us not to be deceived, eſpecially, at a time, when civil commotions have ſo lately appeared in the nation; and the end thereof, had the attempts ſucceeded, muſt unavoidably have been the moſt abject Slavery; ſlavery both of mind and body.

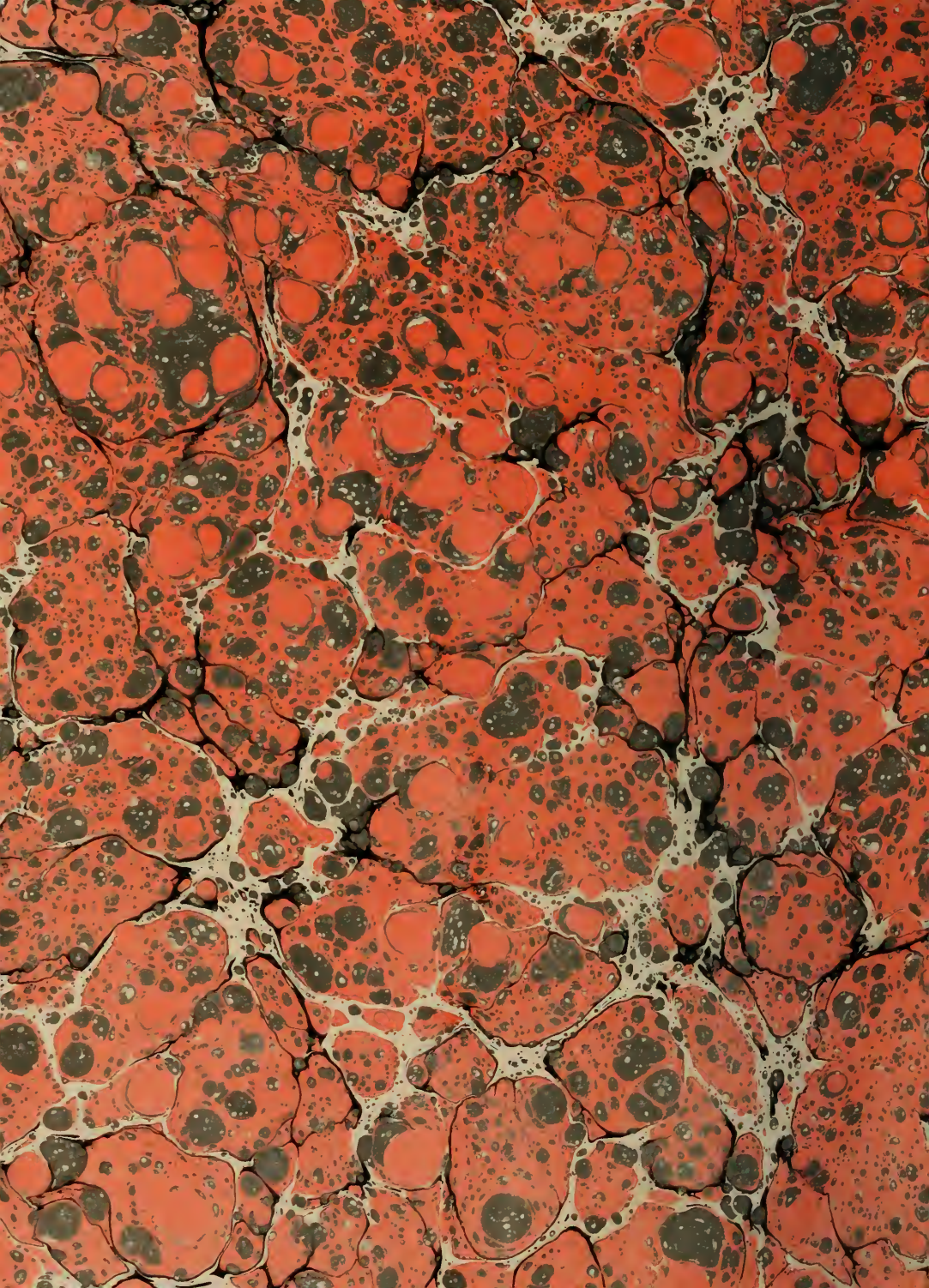
Prov. xxiv. 21.

Theſe conſiderations will be no curbs to true Liberty, no checks to our watchfulneſs and zeal for the good of our Country: they will rather animate us to cheriſh, to maintain, to perpetuate the ineſtimable bleſſings of Pure Religion and Free Government, which are aſcertained to us by the Preſent Happy Eſtabliſhment. Would we tranſmit theſe bleſſings, unimpaired and uncorrupted, to our lateſt poſterity? let us guard againſt every attack upon them: but let the ſtrongeſt guard be upon our own hearts. Recollect, what experience teaches us throughout all the kingdoms of the

earth: the Virtue and the Power of nations have the ſame period. It is not, merely, the force of their enemies, which ſubdues them; their own vices make them ripe for deſtruction. It is not the being incloſed within hills or ſeas, which conſtitutes the ſtrength of a nation; the virtuous principles of its members are the real ſources from whence the health and vigour of the whole body muſt flow: if they are tainted, the ſtreams, which run through the different veins of the Conſtitution, muſt be corrupt.

Upon the whole:—This Nation has ſuffered different trials of proſperity and adverſity: it has undergone various ſtruggles and convulſions from the miſeries of anarchy and confuſion, as well as from the attempts of arbitrary power in Church and State. We have been ſaved from both through the goodneſs of the Almighty; *the Lord hath ſmote, and healed us:* and we are now in full poſſeſſion of our Civil and Religious Liberties, which nothing can ſo effectually deſtroy, as our own vices. We have indeed been lately near a criſis, which ſhould awaken every one, that has any ſenſe left of all that he ought to hold moſt dear: we have again been moſt providentially delivered from the calamities, which threatened us: but who can deliver a people from themſelves, or from the conſequences of their own conduct? Let us therefore make a right uſe of theſe mercies and chaſtiſements of Heaven, by cultivating

Iſa. xix. 22.

ting thoſe principles; from which if we depart, we ſhall not long have integrity and fortitude enough, to bear up againſt Civil Convulſions; nor a ſufficient love of truth amongſt us, to reſiſt the introduction of a Falſe Religion. We may think we have as firm a defence in the popular abhorrence of Civil and Eccleſiaſtical Tyranny, as we might have in a rational ſteady zeal for Pure Religion and Free Government: but we ſhall be fatally deceived, if the foundation is not laid in Virtue. For *righteouſneſs only*, in the very conſtitution of things, *can exalt* or ſupport *a nation*; *but ſin is the reproach*, becauſe it is, by the appointment of God, the inevitable ruin *of any people*. Prov. xiv. 34.

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